

25 August, 2020

Save the Powerhouse, the active Ultimo-based community group, asks these critical questions in an email and Facebook report, following the second hearing of the current Inquiry on 21 August, and the news that the storage development is under way:

WAS THE PHM “MOVE” CANCELLATION JUST A HOAX? - CASTLE HILL EXPANSION

1) CASTLE HILL "POWERHOUSE EXPANSION" WEBINAR TONIGHT 6:00-7:30 PM

If you are interested in hearing more about the Government's plans for enlarging collection storage facilities at Castle Hill, join this "Zoom" Webinar tonight from 6:00-7:40pm <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/expansion-of-museums-discovery-centre-castle-hill-community-webinar-tickets-113855524940>

We believe that the Government intends to build those facilities to replace the Harwood Building in Ultimo.

2) WAS THE PHM “MOVE” CANCELLATION JUST A HOAX?

“Was the July 4 announcement that the Powerhouse will remain in Ultimo (and that the “relocation” project was presumably cancelled) simply a hoax”? That was probably among the most critical of key questions the Select Committee put to witnesses during last Friday’s 2nd Hearing proceedings. In this case it was persistent Walt Secord, Shadow Arts Minister, who’s clearly as determined as ever to expose ongoing Government dishonesty.

And it’s a question that everyone is now asking. For the first five minutes following the announcement, perhaps there were a few sighs of relief, but then reality kicked in as everyone quickly realised that the so-called “announcement” had actually announced...NOTHING AT ALL, and that the Government’s position was exactly as before. Think about it.

Don Harwin, in his first incarnation as Arts Minister, had consistently said that he planned to leave a “cultural presence” in Ultimo, sometimes described as large, 1500-seat “lyric theatre” (aka an American-style music hall) in the converted Harwood Building – even though it is only 40m wide - and sometimes as a “fashion centre’ in the same location. Nonetheless, whatever the final form of his projected “cultural presence”, it would obviously need four walls and a roof, so Harwin has clearly always intended to “leave the Powerhouse in Ultimo”, even if only as an empty shell to house his “cultural” toys.

So what on earth was that supposedly earth-shattering announcement all about?

It was widely rumoured that Treasurer Perrotet had ‘permitted’ Premier Berejiklian to bring Harwin back from the wilderness into her cabinet, on condition that cancellation of the Powerhouse move project was formally publicised. So the announcement certainly appears as an attempted cruel hoax – sick joke? - by Government to show that they had “listened to the community”, but which would, in fact, give them a free hand to continue to do exactly as they like with the Powerhouse, and possibly, too, a gambit to mark Harwin’s renaissance. Fortunately, it was a failed hoax. Both the NSW community and the Select Committee conducting the Inquiry, have seen right through it and will be even more wary in future of a Government pathologically addicted to lies and deception.

Save the Powerhouse

